

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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a1* 1. A printer driver for association with a data stream being presented to a printer, said data stream adapted to enable said printer to print on one or more sheets of paper information in accordance with said data stream, said data stream containing certain data bits useful for controlling functions additional to said printing, said driver comprising:

5 means for abstracting at least a portion of said certain data bits from said data stream;
and

means for using at least some of said abstracted data for controlling at least one of said additional functions.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is the printing of address information on material separate from said printing.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is the printing of a postage indicia on material separate from said printing.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is a dialog box for allowing options from a user.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is accepting additional data from another source.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is directing the abstracted portion to multiple locations.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is storage in a memory.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is directing the abstracted portion to a viewable medium.

9. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is the changing of form of the data.

10. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is the delivery of said data to a location remote from said printer driver.

11. The system of claim 1 wherein said at least one additional function is the change in location and/or format of the data based upon an interaction between certain data in said data stream and data stored in said printer driver.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein said printer driver is operable on said data stream coming from a program operating in a computing device to control at least a portion of the printing of said printer.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein said printer driver is located remote from said computing device.

14. The system of claim 12 wherein said printer driver is located within said printer.

15. The system of claim 12 wherein said abstracting means includes:
means for examining said data stream for certain preestablished data patterns.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein said data patterns are selected from the list including:

return address, destination address, mailing date, number of pages, type of inserts, mailing service type, postage indicia, bar codes, tracking codes, control codes, graphics, application types.

17. The system of claim 15 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the beginning and ending of postage indicia data.

18. The system of claim 15 wherein said additional function is the printing of said postage indicia on a document other than the document to which said data stream is being directed.

19. The system of claim 15 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the beginning and ending of address information contained within said data stream.

20. The system of claim 18 wherein said driver further contains:
means for creating from said address information data for controlling the printing of a postage indicia.

21. The system of claim 15 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the beginning and ending of each document to be printed.

22. The system of claim 15 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the number of pages of a document.

23. The method of printing certain information on a printed document, said method comprising the steps of:

sending a data stream to a printing device so that said printing device may print one or more documents from said data stream;

reviewing said data stream to create therefrom a separate data stream for controlling additional functions with respect to said printing of said documents.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said additional functions are selected from the list including printing address information, printing postage indicia, folding a printed document, stuffing a printed document into an envelope, creating a mailing address for the delivery of a printed document, creating a postage indicia, creating an auxiliary document in association with a printed document, controlling a second printer operating in conjunction with said printer, verifying the address, normalizing the address, adding delivery bar codes.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein said reviewing step includes the step of:
copying from said data stream certain portions of said data stream.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein said certain portions include address
information with respect to a particular document to be printed.

27. The method of claim 26 further including the step of:
creating from said copied address information a postage indicia.

28. The method of claim 23 wherein said separate data stream includes data
accepted from a source other than said data stream to said printing device.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein said creating step includes the steps of:
maintaining in a secure memory an amount available for controlling the generation of a
postage indicia

calculating under joint control of said secure memory and said separate data stream an
amount of postage to be applied to a particular document to be printed; and

deducting said calculated postage amount from said secure memory if said calculated
postage amount is available in said secure memory.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein said certain portions include postage indicia
information with respect to a particular document to be printed.

31. The method of claim 23 wherein said reviewing step includes the step of enabling a dialog box.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein said dialog box interacts with a user to provide at least one of the following:

return address and logo

data of mailing

address verification/prompt for insufficient information

review scanned data

hints for scanning data stream

additional cover page information or label/envelope customization

delivery (mail service, fax, e-mail, etc.)

options (postage amount, paper weight, weight of inserts, additional mail services)

33. A computer program product for use in association with a data stream being directed to a general purpose printer, said data stream adapted to enable said printer to print information in accordance with said data stream, said computer product comprising:

an abstracting program operable for reviewing said data stream to obtain therefrom information for controlling printing operations ancillary to said printing operation; and

a controller working in cooperation with said abstracting program and with said obtained information for enabling at least one said ancillary printing operation.

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34. The computer product of claim 33 wherein said at least one ancillary operation is the printing of address information on material separate from material on which printing is occurring.

35. ~~The computer product of claim 33 wherein said at least one ancillary operation is the printing of a postage indicia on material separate from material on which said printing is occurring.~~

36. The computer product of claim 33 wherein said one ancillary operation is the acceptance of data from a source other than said data stream.

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37. The computer product of claim 33 wherein said computer product is operable on said data stream coming from a general purpose computing device.

38. The computer product of claim 37 wherein said computer product is located remote from said computing device.

39. The computer product of claim 37 wherein said computer product is located within said printer.

40. The computer product of claim 33 wherein said abstracting program includes:
a control program for examining said data stream for certain preestablished data patterns.

41. The computer product of claim 40 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the beginning and ending of postage indicia data.

42. The computer product of claim 40 wherein one said ancillary operation is the printing of said postage indicia on a document other than the document to which said data stream is being directed.

43. The computer product of claim 40 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the beginning and ending of address information contained within said data stream.

44. The computer product of claim 43 wherein said computer product further contains:

a program for creating from said address information data for controlling the printing of a postage indicia.

45. The computer product of claim 43 wherein said certain preestablished data patterns include the beginning and ending of each document to be printed.

46. The computer product of claim 33 wherein said data patterns are selected from the list including:

return address, destination address, mailing date, number of pages, type of inserts, mailing service type, postage indicia, bar codes, tracking codes, control codes.